

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

In-Person & Virtual Meeting via Zoom

December 10, 2024 - Meeting Notes

Planning Commissioners Present: Jason Alves, District 1; Gretchen Fritsch, Jeff Skutley, District 2; Lorie Spogen, District 1; Roger Moore, At-Large; Frank Corbin, District 3

Staff Present: Mindy Brooks, Director of Community Development; Guilherme Motta, Senior Long-Range Planner; Katie Johnson, Office Assistant Senior.

Planning Commissioners Excused Absences:

Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Draft Meeting Notes – November 12, 2024
- 2025 Planning Commission Docket
- Staff Report - Qualified Professional Definition
- Planning Commission Bylaws

1. Zoom Guidelines

The clerk dispensed with the Zoom Guidelines.

2. Call to Order

A. Determination of a Quorum

7 Commissioners were present; there was a quorum. The Chair called for staff and commissioner introductions.

3. Approval of Agenda

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the agenda for December 10, 2024. Commissioner Russell made the motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Alves. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the meeting notes for November 12, 2024. Commissioner Russell made the motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Alves. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment

Ronald Braun gave public comments regarding the Qualified Professional Definition. Ronald Braun gave his comment to Mindy Brooks.

Commissioner Corbin advised the attendance that if any attendees would like to provide testimony on the topic of Qualified Professional should come to the next Planning Commission meeting on January 14, 2025, and will be a public hearing. Commissioner Corbin asked Ronald Braun to provide a copy of his comments regarding the Qualified Professional Definition.

6. A. Workshop – 2025 Planning Commission Docket

A. Staff Presentation: Mindy Brooks, Lewis County Director of Community Development, shared a presentation of the 2025 Planning Commission Docket. The Commission will need to adopt the docket at the first meeting of the new year on January 14, 2025. Mindy Brooks did point out that the April 8, 2025, Planning Commission meeting will be held in Packwood. Mileage will be reimbursed for the commissioners. No more than 3 commissioners can carpool as it will create a quorum.

6. B. Workshop – Qualified Professional Definition

A. Staff Presentation: Mindy Brooks, Lewis County Director of Community Development, shared a presentation of the staff report on the definition of a Qualified Professional. Mindy Brooks stated that there has been conversation that the county is already implementing these changes however this is untrue. These changes cannot be implemented until the BOCC approves them. The current regulations allow third party review.

Commissioner Spogen asked if the certification is the same as a license. Mindy Brooks stated that there is no state license for wetland scientists, only a national certification and several college certifications. Lorie Spogen asked what kind of errors can be found on a Wetland report. Mindy Brooks stated that these can vary but staff have received reports that stated there was no wetland and, on a site visit, it was determined that there was a wetland.

Commissioner Skutley asked what the applicant can do if they disagree with the determination. Mindy Brooks stated the decision could be appealed to the Hearing Examiner and to the State Supreme Court, after that.

Commissioner Alves asked if the requirement of a bachelor's degree is necessary. Mindy Brooks said that the certifications are what is important, and all of the listed certificates require a four-year degree. Mindy Brooks suggested that if the commissioners or anyone present is aware of

a formal wetland scientist certification that does not require a 4-year degree, they should share that information with her. Commissioner Alves would like to see another option besides just a 4-year degree; a college degree doesn't always prove that the reviewer is qualified. Mindy Brooks stated she is open to another option, but it would need to give some assurances that the person is qualified to complete wetland delineations.

Commissioner Skutley asked if there is a license process for Wetlands. Mindy Brooks stated there is no license or program. Mindy Brooks stated that if there are any professionals in the industry that have other certificates that do not require a 4-year degree that shows the reviewer is qualified, they should email her. Commissioner Corbin and Spogen agreed and encouraged the idea of exploring more certifications outside of a 4-year degree as well.

Commissioner Moore expressed concern that once the Qualified Professional goes into effect that the smaller business that do not conform to the definition may slowly lose business. Mindy Brooks stated that there are only two people who submit wetland reports who would no longer meet the definition of qualified professional. In The proposed qualified professional definition provides the option for those two people to continue to submit.

Commissioner Russell stated he approves of the new definition, and states this is a scientific field which does require professionals in the field of science. He explained that the work of the professional is technical in nature and a 4-year degree is appropriate.

Commissioner Spogen asked how many errors will be accepted before disqualification. Mindy Brooks stated that decisions are left up to the Director, as some errors may be more egregious than others. Mindy also stated the professionals will be mailed a letter to let them know they have been disqualified. The professionals may appeal this disqualification to the Hearing Examiner.

Commissioner Corbin asked the commissioners if they would like another workshop or to move on to the January 14 public hearing. The commissioners agreed to move onto the January 14 meeting. Mindy Brooks stated public written testimony window opens 15 days before the hearing date and written testimony must be received by 4pm the day before the meeting. Commissioner Spogen asked if it is possible to send the testimony to the commissioners as they are provided to Community Development and Mindy agreed to provide the written testimony as they arrive, stating much of the public testimony does not arrive early.

Commissioner Russell asked if it is still the case that if hydric soils are seen on the maps, it will trigger the need to hire a Wetland Professional. Commissioner Russell stated he does not believe the laws specifically mention the need for a Wetland Report. Mindy stated that it is not the RCWs that mentions requiring a Wetland Report but the Best Available Science that the county must comply with. She agreed to bring this issue back to the Commission during the review of Best Available Science with the Critical Areas Ordinance.

Commissioner Skutley asked how often the county wetland maps are updated. Mindy Brooks

responded the county relies on the state and federal mapping and the state will need to be asked when the next update will take place.

- The Commission took a five-minute recess -

7. Good of the Order:

A. Staff: Mindy Brooks shared with the Commissioners the Planning Commission Bylaws. There are items that have changed and updated.

Commissioner Fritsch asked if the donation of time only pertained to hearings and Mindy agreed. Mindy said that is at the discretion of the Commission and does not have to be in the bylaws.

Commissioner Corbin mentioned he would like to see an exit interview or dos and don'ts of when a Planning Commissioner leaves the commission. Mindy agreed that it is a good idea.

B. Commissioners: Commissioner Moore stated he is participating in the Business Week at the Centralia College next week as a local business owner. The event consists of High School Juniors who participate in the development of a business and the ins and outs of owning a business.

Commissioner Fritsch stated she spoke with Commissioner Brummer about Short Term Rentals. She stated the commissioner was open and understanding of the topic. Mindy Brooks mentioned there will be a discussion tomorrow, December 11, at the Director's meeting between Discover Lewis County, BOCC, and Packwood Trail Project to discuss street improvements while supporting tourism in Packwood.

Commissioner Corbin stated that he has received many comments and concerns about impact fees from the public. The topic of impact fees will be discussed at the Director's meeting tomorrow as well and Mindy encouraged the Commissioners to attend. Impact fee conversation will not come to the Planning Commission, it is solely a BOCC decision.

Commissioner Russell asked about a potential conflict of interest related to the qualified profession. Mindy stated she does not believe Commissioner Russell has a conflict of interest; however, she said he could talk with the Prosecuting Attorney to go over the guidelines if he would like.

Commissioner Russell reminded the commission that fees are increasing at the start of the new year.

Commissioner Skutley stated the commission, and the county needs to be more thoughtful about the boundaries of expanding an UGA. There are many services that cannot be sustained and upheld in those areas.

8. Calendar:

The next Planning Commission meeting will be on January 14, 2025, and the agenda item will be a public hearing on the Definition of a Qualified Professional. The adoption of the 2025 Docket and appointing Commissioners will take place at this meeting as well. Mindy reminded the commission to send her any questions ahead of time to guide the meeting to answer those questions. Mindy also stated there will be an increase of information regarding the Comprehensive Plan in the new year and it's very important that they review materials before the meetings.

Mindy reminded the Commissioners there will not be a regularly scheduled meeting on December 24, 2024.

Adjourn

Commissioner Moore made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:41pm.